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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Wednesday, August 17, 1938

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "NOTES FOR FOOD SHOPPERS." Information from the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, United States Department of Agriculture, and the Consumers' Counsel, Agricultural Adjustment Administration.

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More notes for the August food-shopper today.

On your market list this month, jot down corn and cantaloupes. August is the month for heaviest shipments and lowest prices of sweet corn and cantaloupes. Other items for your August market list are: okra, eggplant, avocados and nectarines because these also come to market in largest quantity this month. Four other summer fruits that are nearing the end of their season are: apricots, berries, watermelons and cherries. Peach shipments, too, are on the wane.

During August you can expect the price of lamb and poultry, potatoes and sweetpotatoes to go down, and the price of pork, oranges, butter and eggs to go up. Beef prices usually hit the season's high point in July or August and then move down. This August oranges and butter will probably go up less than usual, while egg prices may go up more than usual. As for the price of poultry, especially young chickens, that will probably go down more than usual this month. Just by way of illustrating how chicken prices are going, here are some figures from New York, the only ones I have. The wholesale prices of fowl in New York in late July were about the same as last year but chicken prices were from 2 and a half to 5 cents lower. The young chickens, broilers or fryers weighing from 2 to 3 pounds, were the ones that had dropped the most in price. Eggs appear to be the only one of the foods just mentioned that will cost more this August than last.

To return to corn and cantaloupes, you can expect about the same amount of sweet corn for sale this year as last but slightly more cantaloupes. (By the way, the cantaloupes you've been eating just lately probably grew on Delaware, Maryland or Indiana soil.)

As for the price of meat, the buy this month and for coming months still seems to be lamb. We're having a record-size lamb crop this year, so you'll probably see plenty of this meat on the market during the 1938-39 season. From August through November most of the lambs going to market are grass-fed. But only those in best condition are slaughtered. The rest are kept for fattening on grain and other feeds and marketed as fed-lambs after November. The price of lamb in retail markets generally drops during the last 5 months of the year.

By the way, listeners often ask for directions for cooking various cuts of lamb. If you also want to make the most of the big lamb crop, the leaflet that will help you is: "Lamb As You Like It." "Lamb As You Like It," Leaflet No. 28. You order it by writing to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. It's free.

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Now about potatoes and sweetpotatoes. Potato prices in eastern markets generally are lowest in August, while in western markets the seasonal low point usually comes in October or November. Prices dropped fast when the reports came in of a bigger late crop than was expected. The late crop supplies most of the potatoes we eat from September through April. It will probably be above average this year though not so large as last year's big crop.

The 1938 crop of sweetpotatoes has already started to market and prices are going down -- probably will continue down until they hit bottom in October. The sweetpotato crop this year is the third largest on record.

As for butter prices, they are low for this time of year. In late July 92-score butter was retailing in New York at only 31 and a half cents a pound. That was 6 cents a pound lower than a year ago. Since January last the price of butter has dropped 9 cents a pound.

This seems to be quite a year for beans and peas. Apparently we're going to have all the canned snap beans and green peas we want -- at least growers have raised considerably more of these vegetables for canning than they did last year. And though fewer cans have been left over from last year than often are left, there are still plenty waiting on the shelves.

We have a good many dried beans, too. It looks as if we'd have as many as we did last year and last year made a record. Though the dried bean crop is smaller this year, that will be made up by a bigger carryover than last year.

Here's a little news about canned grapefruit juice. Supplies are large and prices are low. Big grapefruit crops of the past few seasons have resulted in a marked increase in the quantities canned as fruit and juice. Fresh grapefruit supplies during August are usually very small, with shipments coming in from Cuba, Puerto Rico and California. The first grapefruit from the 1938-39 crop will be coming to market in September with much larger supplies in October.

As I said at the start, the items for the thrifty market list this month include sweet corn and cantaloupes, okra, eggplant, avocados, lamb and young chickens, butter, sweetpotatoes, canned grapefruit juice (for cooling summer drinks) and dried or canned beans and peas.

As everyone knows, the weather this year has had much to do with the good crops and low prices of seasonal foods. Mr. Kincer of the Weather Bureau says that about 80 percent of this country has had more than normal rainfall, the country as a whole averaging 12 per cent above normal. Mr. Kincer says that the plentiful rains this year and last suggest that the recent long drought cycle is over and that the years immediately ahead may bring more adequate rainfall to the United States. The generally dry cycle that lasted from 1930 to 1937 was the first long drought period after the one that ran from 1886 through 1895. After that from '96 to 1910 rainfall was comparatively abundant.
